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AUTHOR Borgers, Sherry B.; Price, Gary E.
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ABSTRACT

This study compared the appropriateness of course choices by female and male counselees as rated by female and male counselors to determine the possibility of sex bias effect. The sex, grade, and ability level of ratees were controlled in a four-way analysis of variance. The subjects were randomly selected and assigned to each counselor in order to insure equal numbers of males and females from each grade and each ability level. The counselors who rated each subject four times, were given achievement information, ability level data, courses previously taken, grades received, and information about future plans. While no significant differences were found between the ratings of the female and male counselors, significant differences were found in the following areas: (1) ability level and appropriate course selection; and (2) more appropriate course choice of females over males (using post hoc procedures the significant difference occurred at the junior year in high school). (Author/VG)

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An Evaluation of the Sex Stereotyping Effect as Related to Counselor Perceptions of Courses Appropriate for High School Students

Sherry B. Borgers (presenter)

Gary E. Price

University Counseling Center, The University of Kansas

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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An Evaluation of the Sex Stereotyping Effect as Related to Counselor Perceptions of Courses Appropriate for High School Students

Sexist attitudes and the struggle for equality for women can be seen throughout society. These attitudes and conflicts are both reflected in and perpetuated by the most organized and systematic agent of socialization in our society--the educational system. Although much of the literature emphasizes the harmful effects of sexism in relation to women, it is important to remember that sex bias limits the potential of all people, both males and females.

There is sex bias at all levels, but the effects during the high school years may be especially detrimental since this is the period when crucial decisions concerning life styles are often made. In girls of high school age, there is a decline in career commitment and this decline has been related to perceptions of male classmates' disapproval of femal intelligence (Matthews and Tiedeman, 1964). By the ninth grade twenty-five percent of the boys as compared to three percent of the girls are considering careers in science or engineering (O'Hara, 1962).

Since counselors concentrate on the development of the individual, it seems that they are in a position to respond to the needs of both females and males. However, Hawley (1971) concluded that much of the existing career theory does not apply to women and that counseling for girls is often based on borrowed theory or stereotypes. The results of a study by Pietrofesa and Schlossberg (1970) indicate counselor bias against women entering a masculine occupation. Thomas and Stewart (1971) found that secondary school counselors rated females with a typical career goal more in need of counseling than females with

traditional career goals.

Because of societal expectations and the manner in which counselors have stereotyped courses and occupations, this study was designed to investigate sex bias in relation to decision making. More specifically the question was, "Will high school counselors rate females and males differently in terms of the appropriateness of the decisions they make concerning selection of courses for the coming year?"

Method

Subjects. This research was conducted with 9th, 10th, and 11th grades in suburban comprehensive Midwestern high schools having approximately 3,400 students. After high school, 45% of its students attended four-year colleges, 20% attend the local community college, 25% go directly into jobs without further training, and approximately 10% attend technical and specialized schools.

Random selection of 96 students in the sample was done to ensure equal numbers of each sex, equal representation from each of the three grade levels, and equal numbers from each ability quartile. The freshmen, sophomore, and junior classes were divided into ability quartiles based on composite grade equivalent scores on the Educational Development Series Battery (Scholastic Testing Service, Inc., Bensenville, Illinois). The composite score was based on eight subscale scores in the areas of Language, Technical, and Social Studies. From each quartile in each of the three grade levels, two boys and two girls were randomly selected and assigned to five counselors that would rate the appropriateness of their courses selected for the following year. Each student took about eleven required and seven elective courses during high school. The result was a 2x2x3x4 completely crossed and balanced experimental design with equal cell frequencies in which counselor's sex, client's sex, grade, and ability

level were the independent variables.

Data Analysis. A four-way analysis of variance (Glass & Stanley, 1970) was used to interpret the data. Variation in the analysis could result from the following sources: Sex of rater, ratee's sex, grade, and ability level. Of major interest was whether or not the female and male rates rated the female and male students differently. Also of interest was whether the ratings were different in relation to the ability level and grade of the student.

Procedures. Each of the ninety-six subjects was randomly assigned to a pool of thirteen counselors. Each counselor was provided a form (see Table 1) which summarized the student's apptitude(s), future plans, previous courses taken, and courses enrolled for the next academic year. Each of the counselors was asked to rate the appropriateness of the courses enrolled for on a scale from one to five with five being high. For each of the subjects the average rating was computed for the male counselors and the female counselors. The average rating was used as the dependent variable to determine if there was a difference in terms of the ratings of the appropriateness of courses based on one's sex, year in high school, and ability level. Each of the forms had the expected graduation date of the student and the sex of the student. The student's name was deleted from the form so that the forms were rated anonymously by both the male and the female counselors.

Insert Table 1 about here

Results

The means for each of the groups is presented in Table 2. There were no overall significant difference related to the rating of the female counselors as compared to the male counselors ($F = .0544$ with 1/144 d.f.). The female counselor's mean rating was 3.45 and the male counselor's mean rating was 3.41. There was a significant difference related to the sex of the clients. Overall, the female students were rated as having more appropriate courses than were the male students. The female's mean was 3.62 and the male's mean was 3.24 ($F = 6.696$, 1/144 d.f., $p \leq .01$). The other significant difference for main effects was related to the ability quartile variable. The higher the ability level the higher the rating for the appropriateness of the courses selected. The first quartile had a mean of 3.16; the second, 3.07; the third, 3.57; and the fourth 4.91 ($F = 6.795$, 3/144 d.f., $p \leq .001$).

Insert Table 2 about here

Using Scheffe post hoc procedures to determine which of the quartile(s) was/were significantly different from each other, it was determined that the second ability quartile was significantly different from the fourth ability quartile.

Insert Table 3 about here

All possible interaction effects were tested. Where significant differences were found, Scheffe post hoc comparisons were computed to determine where the difference(s) actually was/were. There was a significant interaction effect with grade level and the sex of the subject. For the female subjects, the freshmen had a mean of 3.41, the sophomores a mean of 3.67, and the juniors a mean of 3.79. For the male subjects, the freshmen had a mean of 3.51, the sophomores had a mean of 3.34, and the juniors 2.86 ($F = 4.0717$, 2/144 d.f., $p \leq .025$).

Insert Table 4 about here

Discussion

The data from this study indicate that there was no overall difference between ratings of female and male counselors. This is an important finding since it gives reliability to the similarity of perceptions and the ability of counselors to differentiate on the basis of the information given.

A second finding is that female subjects were rated as having more appropriate courses than male subjects. There are several possible explanations for this finding. It may be due to the type of courses available. It could be that more care was taken by counselors, parents, or others in helping females select courses. It might be that females actually chose more appropriate courses. It is also possible that the level of vocational maturity was greater for females. It may be that females were viewed in a more positive manner and were seen as better fitting into the educational setting or that counselors expected more from males. These data do not explain why the

females were rated as having more appropriate courses; however, this is an interesting finding since it contrasts with the literature which indicates counselor bias against women.

The third finding indicates a significant interaction effect related to the grade and the sex of the subject. As freshmen and shophomores, both females and males were rated as having equally appropriate courses; however, at the junior level females were rated as having almost 1.00 (on a five point scale) more appropriate courses than males. This could mean that female juniors were better advised, that courses at this level were more appropriate for females, that there were greater expectations for males, or that females made better choices. Since the difference between the appropriateness of choices for females and males is greater at the higher grade level, it may suggest that there is more discrimination between the sexes as they get older and nearer adulthood.

The last finding indicates that the higher the ability of the student, the more appropriate the courses and/or the more care in advisement. Specifically, significant differences were found between the second and fourth quartile. The mean average would indicate that students in quartiles 1, 2, and 3 were rated as having an almost perfect (4.91 out of five) match of courses. This seems to be discrimination toward all except the high ability student. This is congruent with the fact that the educational system is often criticized for neglecting the lower and average students in terms of both time spent with them and the relevance of curriculum. The finding may also suggest that the students with greater ability had greater vocational maturity and were able to make more appropriate decisions.

In conclusion it is reiterated that it is the responsibility of the counselor to respond to the needs of all people and to contribute to the provision of equal opportunity for all. Certainly there is a need for counselors to examine their own attitudes and to encourage others to do the same. It is most important that counselors be sensitive to the pressures of sex bias and to be aware of forces, both external and internal, that may limit the potential of any individual.

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Table 1

Summary Sheet for Each Student

ID _____ Name _____ Class of, '74 '73 '72 Code 2-3 M
(deleted for counselor rating)

STS Educational Development Series — National Grade Scores

GRADE TESTED	INDIVIDUAL ABILITIES, ACHIEVEMENT AND SKILLS								COMPOSITE SCORES		
	ABILITIES		LANG. STUDIES		TECH STUDIES		SOCIAL STUDIES				
	Non-Verbal	Verbal	Read.	Eng.	Math	Science	The U.S.A.	Solving Everyday Problems	BATTERY COMP.	TOTAL ABIL.	BASIC SKILL
9.9	11.2	11.3	11.7	10.2	9.9	11.3	11.4	11.2	11.2	11.4	10.9

MOTIVATIONS AND INTERESTS

Present Career Plans	Present School Plans	School Interests (9 = Like Very Much, 1 = Dislike Very Much)							
		MUSIC	ART	MATH	SCIENCE	STUDIES	SOC.	ENG.	FOR. LANG.	VOC.
SOC SERV ARTS	COLLEGE	9	9	5	7	9	9	8	3	

CAREER PLANS INDICATED

__1. No schooling after high school

__2. Go to a technical or specialized school
- __a. Beauty culture school
- __b. Art school
- __c. Three-year hospital nursing program
- __d. Business school
- __e. Technical school

✓3. Go to a junior or comm. college
- ✓a. Transfer program
- __b. Take an occ. curricula
- __c. Not sure

__4. Go to four-year college
- __a. Private liberal arts college or university
- __b. State-supported school
- __c. Not sure

__5. I am not sure

Counselor's Rating

5	4	3	2	1

CLASSES TAKEN

Freshmen Year:

Course Title	Credit	Grade	
English 9	2	C	A
German 9	2	C	B
Algebra 9	0	DR	-
Fund. of Algebra 9	2	D	D
Biology 10 BSCS	2	C	C
Health	.25	B	-
P.E.	.75	B	B

Sophomore Year:

Course Title	Credit	Grade	
English 10	2	C	C
Journalism 10	2	D	C
German 10	2	D	D
Hist. West. World 10 Hr.	1	D	DR
Stagecraft	0	-	D
Health	.25	C	-
P.E.	.75	C	B

Junior Year:

Course Title	Credit	Grade
English 11		
American Hist. 11		
Bus. Psych. 11B		
Skyline Staff		
Personal Typ. 10A		
Health		
P.E.		

COURSES SELECTED
for 71-72 school year

Course Title	Credit
F41 PE boys 12 1	
T41 Soc Sci 12	
B46 Bus Law 12 1st	
M53 Skyline Staff	
M47 Clue Study 12	
ReC not on Master Fl	

Table 2

Cell Means and Standard Deviations for Subjects Rated by Female and Male Counselors

Independent Variables				Dependent Variable	
Rater	Ratee	Grade Level	Ability Quartile	Cell Mean	Standard Deviation
Female	Female	1	1	4.03	1.03
			2	2.87	.37
			3	3.88	.85
			4	3.75	1.50
		2	1	3.67	.47
			2	3.54	1.08
			3	3.29	1.53
			4	4.00	1.41
		3	1	3.92	.69
			2	3.54	1.72
			3	3.75	.50
			4	4.67	.47
	Male	1	1	2.71	1.33
			2	2.79	.34
			3	4.37	.28
			4	4.00	1.03
		2	1	3.04	.95
			2	2.79	1.31
			3	3.38	1.80
			4	4.58	.50
		3	1	1.50	1.00
			2	2.33	.98
			3	3.21	1.79
			4	3.08	1.77
Male	Female	1	1	3.04	.83
			2	3.38	1.17
			3	3.06	.52
			4	3.98	.75
		2	1	3.63	.75
			2	4.04	.63
			3	3.75	.83
			4	3.44	1.39
		3	1	3.25	.87
			2	3.29	.88
			3	4.04	.34
			4	3.90	.68
	Male	1	1	3.75	.87
			2	3.71	1.02
			3	3.92	.44
			4	3.83	1.00
		2	1	3.09	.98
			2	2.83	.69
			3	2.94	1.16
			4	4.17	.78
		3	1	2.35	.92
			2	3.56	.83
			3	2.29	1.06
			4	3.56	1.18

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Each of the Ability Quartiles

Quartile	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	3.10	1.08
2	3.07	1.02
3	3.57	1.02
4	3.91	1.07

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for

Each of the Grade Levels

Rate	Grade	Mean	Standard Deviation
FEMALE	Fresh	3.41	1.00
	Soph	3.67	.93
	Juniors	3.79	.85
MALE	Fresh	3.51	1.02
	Soph	3.34	1.17
	Juniors	2.86	1.29